

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6492

INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASUS

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AMEMBASSY JIDDA

S E C R E T AMMAN 9959

EXDIS

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PFOR JO SA SY EG XF

SUBJECT: TALK WITH KING HUSSEIN -KING KHALID VISIT

1. IN MEETING WITH KING HUSSEIN TODAY HE DISCUSSED WITH
ME SEVERAL ASPECTS OF KING KHALIDS' VISIT.

2. HE BEGAN BY TELLING ME THAT SAUDIS HAD COMPLETELY
ACCEPTED EGYPTIAN LINE AND SEEMED TO HAVE DEVELOPED AN
ANTAGONISTIC VIEW OF JORDANIAN-SYRIAN RELATIONS. HE SAID
THAT HE AND RIFAI HAD SPENT A GOOD BIT OF TIME TRYING
TO PUT THEIR NEW RELATIONSHIP IN PERSPECTIVE FOR THE
SAUDIS. HE SAID HE THOUGH THAT THE SAUDIS WERE APPROACHING
A DISSATISFIED SYRIAN IN FRAME OF MIND AND HE DID WHAT
HE COULD TO TRY TO MELLOW THEIR VIEW.

3. BASICALLY, HE SAID SAUDIS WERE PREPARED TO DO
EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO SUPPORT EGYPT AND PRESIDENT SADAT.
IN THIS THE HAD A TENDENCY TO TRY TO TAKE SIDES AND
AVOID A MODERATING OR GO BETWEEN ROLE WITH REGARD TO
EGYPT AND SYRIA. THE KING SAID THERE WAS NO POSSIBILITY
NOW OF ANY KIND OF RAPPROCHMENT BETWEEN EGYPT AND SYRIA.
KHALID DID NOT WANT TO TAKE THIS ON IN VIEW OF HIS RECENT
BITTER MEMORY OF THE EFFORT TO TRY TO RECONCILE SYRIA
AND IRAQ. HUSSEIN'S OWN OPINION WAS THAT RELATIONS BE-

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TWEEN SYRIA AND EGYPT WOULD FURTHER DETERIORATE IN THE

YEAR AHEAD.

4. EXPLORING THE QUESTION FURTHER WITH KING I TOLD HIM THAT IT WAS MY IMPRESSION FROM RECENT TRIP TO JIDDA AND SANA THAT FOR A NUMBER OF REASONS THE SAUDIS WERE NOT INTERESTED IN BUILDING UP YEMEN MILITARILY OR ECONOMICALLY TO THE POINT WHERE IT COULD CONCEIVABLY BECOME A THREAT TO SAUDI ARABIA. KING LEFT IN AT THIS POINT AND SAID HE THOUGH THEY HAD SOME OF THE SAME VIEWS ABOUT JORDAN. HE WENT ON TO SAY HOWEVER THAT WITH FEISAL'S DEMISE, THE SAUDI VIEW ABOUT JORDAN BEING A THREAT OR A COMPETITOR HAD MODERATED CONSIDERABLY. WE DISCUSSED A NUMBER OF THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN YEMEN AND JORDAN AND THE KING AGREED THAT WHILE HE HAD DETECTED SOME OF THE SAME SIGNALS FROM THE SAUDIS HE CHARACTERIZED THEM MORE AS CONFUSED AND UNCERTAIN THAN DELIBERATE EFFORTS TO KEEP JORDAN DOWN. HE ENDED BY EXPRESSING REGRET THAT THE SAUDIS DID NOT SEE MORE CLEARLY THAT JORDAN WAS A HELPFUL BUFFER BETWEEN SAUDI ARABIA AND ISRAEL AND SAUDIA ARABIA AND THE RADICAL ARAB STATES AND THAT JORDAN COULD ALSO PLAY A HELPFUL MODERATING ROLE TOWARD SYRIA AND SYRIAN POLICY. KING SAID HE THOUGH THE END RESULT OF HIS CONVERSATION WAS THAT SAUDIS HAD A LITTLE BETTER-- BUT CERTAINLY NOT PERFECT UNDERSTANDING BOTH OF WHAT HE (HUSSEIN) WAS TRYING TO ACHIEVE POLITICALLY WITH SYRIA AND THE NEED ALSO FOR INCREASED SAUDI SUPPORT OF JORDAN.

5. KING SAID AS FAR AS HE KNOWS THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO TRUTH TO PRESS REPORTS OF A POSSIBLE "MINI SUMMIT" OF ASAD, SADAT, ARAFAT AND KHALID IN RIYADH IN THE NEAR FUTURE..

6. KING SAID SAUDIS ARE DEEPLY CONCERNED BY LEBANESE SITUATION BUT HADVE NO CONCRETE THOUGHTS ABOUT A CONSTRUCTIVE SOLUTION TO PROPOSE.

7. ON THE QUESTION OF SAUDI SUPPORT FOR HAWKS AND VULCAN GUNS FOR JORDAN'S AIR DEFENSE SYSTEM KING SAID THAT SAUDIS AT FIRST HAD BEEN MUCH TAKEN BACK BY
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THE ENORMOUS COSTS OF THE SYSTEM (OVER \$700 MILLION) HAVING EXPECTED FROM PRESS REPORTS THAT SOMETHING AROUND \$300 MILLION WOULD BE REQUIRED. KING SAID JORDAN HAD PROVIDED SAUDIS WITH FULL RECORD OF US-JORDANIAN CONVERSATIONS ON THE SUBJECT AND UR LETTER SETTING FORTH THE ROUGH ORDER OF MAGNITUDE FIGURES FOR A JORDANIAN AIR DEFENSE SYSTEM. KING STATED FURTHER THAT HE HAD TOLD SAUDIS THAT HE HAD GONE INTO THE PROJECT WITH THE IDEA OF

ACQUIRING AN ADEQUATE SYSTEM. FOURTEEN HAWK BATTERIES AND THE VULCAN GUNS WERE NECESSARY AND ANYTHING LESS WOULD BE INCOMPLETE. IF THE SAUDIS DID NOT WANT TO OR COULD NOT PAY HE WOULD HAVE TO SEE WHAT HE COULD OBTAIN CHEAPER ANYWHERE. HE SAID THE SAUDIS UPON CONSIDERATION AGREED TO SUPPORT THE PRESENT SYSTEM THE JORDANIANS WERE BUYING FROM THE UNITED STATES.

8. I ASKED THE KING ABOUT THE SAUDI REACTION TO THE SINAI AGREEMENT. HE SAID THE SAUDIS SEEM TO SHARE HIS OWN RESERVATIONS ABOUT SOME OF THE DETAILS, BUT ARE DETERMINED IN EVERY WAY TO SUPPORT EGYPT. KHALID IS NOW MORE OUTSPOKEN AND HAS FORMED STRONG OPINIONS EVEN IF HIS DETAILED KNOWLEDGE AND BACKGROUND LEAVE SOMETHING TO BE DESIRED. HOWEVER SAUDIS SEEM LESS CONCERNED, THE KING SAID THAN HE IS THAT SOMETHING BE DONE TO PATCH UP EGYPTIAN SYRIAN RELATIONS AND ARE MORE INCLINED TO BE DEEPLY CRITICAL OF SYRIA. BOTH KINGS HAVE REACHED A CONCURRENCE OF VIEW THAT IT WOULD BE WISE TO LEAVE CRITICISM OF THE SINAI AGREEMENT BEHIND. HUSSEIN STILL HAS HOPES EVENTUALLY OF BEING CONSTRUCTIVE BY PROMOTING SOME UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN EGYPT AND SYRIAN ALTHOUGH PRESENT PROSPECTS TO HIM SEEM BLEAK.

9. AT THE END OF OUR TALK KING ADDED ON MORE DEVELOPMENT WHICH HE CALLED "INTERESTING". HE SAID KING KHALID HAS ASKED HIM ABOUT IRAQI PARTICIPATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF AQABA PORT (NEW PIERS) HUSSEIN SAID IRAQIS HAD OFFERED TO FUND THIS PROJECT. KHALID HAD INSISTED THAT SAUDI ARABIA WOULD DO IT AND THAT THE SAUDIS WANTED NO IRAQI ACTIVITIES OF THIS CHARACTER TO TAKE PLACE IN AQABA. KING SAID HE HAS TOLD IRAQIS MONEY WILL NOT BE NEEDED FOR AQABA AND HAS ASKED TO SPEND

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IT ON SOMETHING ELSE (FURTHER AWAY FROM SAUDI FRONTIER.)
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